

First record of Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* for Ethiopia

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Première mention de la Sterne arctique *Sterna paradisaea* pour l'Éthiopie. Une Sterne arctique *Sterna paradisaea* en plumage nuptial a été photographiée au Lac Awassa, Éthiopie, le 10 juin 2011. Ceci constitue la première donnée pour le pays. Il y a une seule observation à l'intérieur des terres, au Somaliland, mais aucune donnée acceptée n'existe pour l'intérieur de l'Afrique de l'Est.

On the morning of 10 June 2011 we were birding at the Old Fish Dock at Lake Awassa, Ethiopia (07°03'N 38°26'E), when PY spotted a distant tern flying over the lake, some hundreds of metres away. He drew the bird to the attention of DF who observed it through a telescope, whereupon it was immediately apparent that it was a *Sterna* tern in full breeding plumage. Furthermore, to DF's surprise the uniform appearance of the upper surface of the primaries (lacking a black 'wedge' as in Common Tern *S. hirundo*) suggested Arctic Tern *S. paradisaea*, unlikely as that seemed. We all watched the bird through the telescope and PY & DF obtained

record photographs. MG confirmed that Arctic Tern had never been recorded in Ethiopia before (cf. Ash & Atkins 2009), so DF hurried along the lakeshore seeking better photographs. Fortunately, the tern flew repeatedly back and forth along the shore close to a small promontory, permitting DF to obtain hundreds of photographs as well as video footage. After a while the bird settled on the lake surface where it sat quietly gradually drifting closer to shore. After c.30 minutes MG & PY joined DF for further views of the bird, which was still present when we left the site late morning.

Description (taken in the field): adult with full black cap and long outer tail feathers. Bill red



Figures 1–2. Breeding-plumaged Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*, Lake Awassa, Ethiopia, 10 June 2011. Note the uniform grey upper surface to the primaries which are all of the same generation, lacking the black 'wedge' almost always present on Common Tern *S. hirundo*, the neat blackish tips to the underside of the primaries forming a narrow trailing edge to the outer half of the underwing, and the pale panel formed by the white inner webs to the primaries (David Fisher)

Sterne arctique *Sterna paradisaea* en plumage nuptial, Lac Awassa, Éthiopie, 10 juin 2011. Noter le dessus uniformément gris clair des primaires, qui sont toutes de la même génération et qui ne possèdent pas le triangle sombre et pointu plus ou moins marqué de la Sterne pierregarin *S. hirundo*, le dessous des primaires aux pointes noires nettes formant un bord étroit, et la plage pâle sur le dessous des primaires (David Fisher)

except for dusky tip to culmen. White cheeks. Grey breast and belly. Uniform appearance to upper side of primaries—no sign of Common Tern's black 'wedge'. Underside of primaries had neat black tips forming trailing edge to outer half of underwing. Inner webs of primaries white creating a pale panel over outer half of the underwing when primaries spread. Upperside of inner half of wing grey, with white tips to secondaries forming narrow white trailing edge to wing. White rump. White tail with very long outermost feathers. Outer tail feathers with narrow black outer web. Legs red. Eye dark. Outer primary on right wing damaged, with what appeared to be a broken-off tip.

Quite what an adult Arctic Tern was doing on an inland lake in Ethiopia in mid June is a mystery. However, the previous afternoon a massive storm had hit the lake with winds so strong that the gates at our hotel, which give access to the lakeshore, had been blown down. But the storm appeared to come from the west, hardly a suitable origin for an Arctic Tern—inland Africa—so this was perhaps coincidental.

There is one previous inland record of Arctic Tern for Somaliland (23 May; year unknown) (Ash & Miskell 1988) but no accepted records for inland East Africa, although I. Robertson & R. Schofield observed two Arctic Terns on

Lake Baringo, Kenya, on 7–8 July 1989, which record was rejected by the East African Rarities Committee. There are at least 12 coastal records from Somalia—mostly singles in April and May, but two small flocks in April (Ash & Miskell 1988)—and a single record for coastal Kenya, on 6 July 2002 (Bisschop 2002).

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